BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: S. George Fukuoka

S. George Fukuoka was born in 1920 in Pā'ia, Maui. He was educated at Maui High School, the University of Hawai'i and the University of Michigan Law School.

Fukuoka taught in public schools from 1942 to 1948, first at Lahainaluna School for three years, then at Hilo High School for the following three years. After completing law school in 1951, he became the Maui deputy county attorney. From 1952 to 1954, he served as the Hāna district magistrate. He entered private practice in 1954.

Fukuoka was a member of the Maui County Board of Supervisors, 1955 to 1956 and 1964 to 1966. He served as a Democratic territorial senator from 1957 to 1959, and as a state senator from 1959 to 1964, and 1967 to 1968. He was appointed state circuit judge, serving from 1968 to 1982.

Tape Nos. 17-51-1-90 and 17-52-1-90

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

S. George Fukuoka (SF)

January 26, 1990

Wailuku, Maui

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK) and Warren Nishimoto (WN)

Joy Chong: The following is an interview with S. George Fukuoka. It took place on January 26, 1990 at the Fukuoka residence in Wailuku, Maui. The interviewers were Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto and Warren Nishimoto. This is videotape number one.

MK: Okay. This is videotape number one with S. George Fukuoka on January 26, 1990.

And we'll just open up the interview with when and where were you born?

SF: Well, I was born on Maui, in Pā'ia, which is a little town way out in the east, about, oh, ten miles away from here, and this is in 1920. My birth date is April the 2nd. And there was a little plantation hospital there, and I guess I was born there.

MK: And what number child are you in your family?

SF: I'm the oldest.

MK: Okay. And tell us about your parents, their background, where they emigrated from, the type of work they did when they arrived here.

SF: Well, my father [Mokuhei Fukuoka], apparently, came ahead of my mother [Tori Fukuoka]. My father was here, and I'm not quite sure what the background was. But in any event, it's after he was here that my mother came over. Both of them came from Yamaguchi[-*ken*], (from) a little island called Ōshima, which is a misnomer because a little island cannot be an *ōshima* [literally means big island], you know. My father, I know, came over before the First World War started. My mother came just after it ended, I think.

MK: And they came to Maui, and what kind of work did they do?

SF: Well, my father worked—I don't really know where my father was working at first, you know. I assumed it must have been some kind of field work. I know my mother worked in the fields, too. She was used to work because back home, in Japan, they just operated a farm, and she was one of the mainstays of the farm, (as) I understand. So, she was very much accustomed to farm work and outdoor work, you know.

As it turned out, partly—maybe primarily—because she got kind of blind sometime in the early [nineteen] twenties. She, well, she (was) not really completely blind. She could see light, and she could notice whether there is somebody in front of her, but she would not be able to recognize that person. Anyway, because of that condition, she spent practically all of her life outdoors. She couldn't do any indoor work. She couldn't, you know, watch TV. She couldn't read. She couldn't do any sewing because of her eyesight. So she spent, as a result, a lot of her time outdoors. Now, fortunately in the plantation, we had a large yard, so we went into raising chickens. We had about 200 chickens at one time. And (with a) large yard, (she could do a lot of) vegetable farming. And maybe it was because of that, that she lived so long. She just died about a month ago, month and a half ago, at age 102. And I always think, you know, it may have been because she spent so much time outdoors and so little time indoors, that she was able to live that long, and of course, the kind of food they ate. Simple foods, mostly from the garden, very little meat. You know, that sort of thing.

MK: And I think last time when we met, you mentioned that your father eventually got into a different type of work on the plantation other than field work.

SF: Yes, soon, about the time, in fact, about the time I was born, maybe even before, he started working in the mill [Maui Agricultural Co.] laboratory. But, that is not to say that he was a chemist or anything, he was just a helper. He used to go around collecting samples of bagasse and juice and molasses and sugar from the sugar mill and bring it back. And they had set procedures to test each of these items for how much sugar there is, and how much—oh, I imagine they must have tested for other kinds of chemicals in each of the samples. But, he was doing that. And he was a kind of slight person, small in size, and I don't know that he would have made a good outdoor-type of worker. But fortunately, he was working in the mill laboratory. This was when we went to Japan, when I was a youngster; (he was) still working there at that time.

MK: And you mentioned that he had some sort of accident that affected his arm?

SF: Oh, yeah. See, we went to Japan in 1923. I was about three or three-and-a-half years old. And incidentally, that's the time when they had the great Tokyo earthquake in Japan. We had just left Yokohama and was headed out towards the country, Yamaguchi area, when we heard about this earthquake. Anyway, (when) we went to Japan for a visit, I was already born. My brother, [Masami Fukuoka] who was about three years younger, was just an infant, just born. While in Japan, he [SF's father] got blood poisoning of his arm, his left arm. And as a result of the blood poisoning, they had to operate. And in operating, they severed the nerve, the main nerve. And in those days, I guess, there wasn't anything they could do once they severed the nerve. So, his left arm became paralyzed completely. And his hand was like this [limp and bent] all the time since then.

And he was, at that point, he decided, (that) he can't come back to Hawai'i because he wouldn't be able to work in the laboratory. (In) the lab, you're going to have to hold up test tubes and beakers, you know, pouring things back and forth, and (with) his left arm being useless, he felt he couldn't do that. He couldn't do any other kind of work because of his useless left arm, so he had decided to stay back in Japan and do what he could to till his rice patch, and things like that.

Well, after about a year or so, we got word from his employer. Actually, not his employer,

as much as his immediate superior in the mill laboratory, (who) wrote and said, "Hey, are you coming back because we're keeping the job open for you." And what happened was my father wrote back and said, "This is what happened to me, my left arm is useless, I can't do any work in the lab anymore, and so I decided that perhaps I better not go back." And the word came back again to him, to my father, saying, "Even if your left arm is useless, if you really want to come back, you better come on back and we'll find something for you to do. Somehow, we'll work something in for you." And with that, my father decided to come back. So, but for that, I would be maybe in Manchuria someplace.

(Laughter)

SF: But it was one of those things that happened, and I've often felt it's quite a coincidence, not a coincidence as much, it's quite a—what's the word I should use?

WN: Twist of fate?

SF: Yeah, it's a small little thing like that happening, and here I am here, instead of in Japan. My whole life would have been different but for that. And the person who asked my father to come back was a guy named J. P. [John P.] Foster, F-O-S-T-E-R. And I've always had a little bit of something for that man, because but for him and his willingness to take my father back, my life would have been entirely different. But after he came back, apparently, they found that he was still able to do what he had been doing, although a little more slowly because his left arm was not good. So he continued in that job until, oh, I think he worked till he was about seventy or so. The same, in the same job.

MK: And in those days, what camp did you live in, in Pā'ia?

SF: Well, there were several camps there. I lived in the same camp as Yamasaki, Senator Mamoru Yamasaki. He was about, maybe about five or six homes away from my home in the same camp. It's a School Camp. It's right (in) between, the camp was right between the elementary school and the Japanese[-language] school, just in that region there. And Yamasaki was, let's see now. He was about three years older than I was, and I know we all went to school together, Maui High School, when he was a senior (and) I was a freshman. And we used to walk to Maui High School which was about four miles away, through the cane fields. And Judge [Kase] Higa was also another one who did that with us. He's a classmate of mine. And we were walking through the cane fields. We used to take our shoes off, and tie the laces (together), sling it over our shoulders, walk through the cane fields because it's very muddy and everything. We'd go to school early in the morning, and we got our lunches, you know, wrapped up, and we'd hide it underneath the school building there, (on a) ledge; wash our feet, put our shoes on, then (we were) ready for school.

(Laughter)

SF: That's what we used to do. But, yeah. And I don't know whether you remember Judge Ogata, Tom Ogata. Now, he was another one. He's a classmate of Yamasaki, and he walked to school, also, with us.

MK: You know, that particular camp, was this segregated by ethnicity and by occupation, or who lived in that camp? Mill workers, field workers or . . .

SF: Most of the people who worked in that camp were Orientals. I think we had some Korean person in there, and we had one or two other races in there. But most of them were Orientals. Now, right adjacent to it, a little further away from the school, was a camp which we'd called the Honeymoon Camp. And that's the camp where young people, plantation people who were married, recently married, were able to have a home there. And then, of course, there were other camps like Spanish A Camp, Spanish B Camp, Hawaiian Camp, Nashiwa Village Camp, and Kāheka was about another two miles away. Kāheka is where Ogata and Higa came from. And they had to walk the distance from Kāheka to Pā'ia before they joined us to walk on to Maui High School. So, (a) lot of, when we think about it, a lot of people, at that time, of course, we never realized what we're going to be, what was going to be happening to us, but, you know, we still seem to have worked out in such a way that we kind of got into the same sort of thing. You know, Higa and Tom and myself, going to law school. Like [Mamoru] Yamasaki getting into politics. As a matter of fact, Yamasaki took over after I resigned the position. I was a senator at that time, and then I left the senate upon my appointment to the bench [1968], and Yama[saki] was appointed to take over my position there.

MK: And now, going back to the time you were growing up, back in those days, who held the power or influence in your community and Maui as a whole?

SF: Well, those were the days of the plantation. The plantation had almost absolute control over everything. And there was very little that, when you talk about power, there was very little that any of us had. And actually, until the time that the war ended, the Second World War ended, and until the time that the younger people started getting into politics, that there was any kind of change taking place. So at that time, if you expected to be elected, you had to be a Republican, or at least a very friendly Democrat. Friendly to the plantation people. And there were a lot of things that happened there that today we would think was very unfair and discriminatory. But we kind of accepted that as a part of life. Life is going to be like that. It's not going to be completely fair, and we kind of accepted it, and worked within that kind of parameter. And we really did not feel that bitter, until we grew up and got along, and then we started getting to college and (getting) all these liberal ideas about rights of people. (Chuckles) Until then, we just kind of accepted what was there. We thought, well, this is the way it is, and we're going to live within this.

My ambition, when I was real young, was to get educated as much as I could (and) work in the plantation, and I was commended for that expression of my intent by my teacher. You know, when I said I wanted to work in the plantation (it was) because that's the most stable kind of business there is in Hawai'i, but that's when I was still, you know, maybe in the fifth or sixth grades, I guess.

MK: And when did your thinking change? Your aspirations?

SF: Well, when I was in the eighth grade, I told myself, I want to be an artist. I had a couple of friends who ended up being commercial artists. And that was my ambition. Then I went to high school, and somewhere along the way in high school, I decided I wanted to be an engineer. And that probably is because I felt I was kind of strong in math and science and that sort of thing, so. Then I went to talk to one of my father's—well, do you know a Hideki Nakamura? Well, you know, he used to work with Bouslog & Symonds [law firm].

WN: Oh.

SF: Not Ed Nakamura, Hideki Nakamura. They're both Nakamuras, but they both used to work there. And I don't know whether he's still there or not. He was there for years and years and years. Anyway, Hideki had a brother who was an electrical engineer here. And my idea was, I didn't know what electrical engineering was, but I wanted to be an electrical engineer because it sounded good. And he was an electrical engineer working for Maui Electric [Co.] here. And he had been a graduate, I think, of Purdue [University, Indiana]. But my father took me to see him. And his advice was, if you want to come back and work in Hawai'i, don't get into electrical engineering because there's no future for you. He was an electrical engineer, but he was only a supervisor of men here, at Maui Electric. So, I gave up the idea of being an electrical engineer.

Now, when I went to college, I applied for Teachers College. And the reason why I did that was because, at that time, teachers who graduated from UH [University of Hawai'i] were guaranteed a job, almost guaranteed a job. Anything else, you take a chance. The teachers, and not only that, there was a great demand for Teachers College entrance. So, it's easy for you to go from Teachers College to some other college, but the vice versa was very difficult. Because if you once got into something other than Teachers College, then if you wanted to go into Teachers College, then it was very difficult. So I started off getting into Teachers College. And when I was there, I kind of liked the idea of being a teacher. So I ended up finishing up Teachers College, and then started off teaching. And I taught for six years before I changed again.

MK: Okay.

WN: I think we have to change tapes.

MK: Yeah, we'll change tapes now.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is videotape number two with George Fukuoka.

MK: This is tape number two with Judge Fukuoka. And we know that you got a teacher's degree and taught for six years. But we're going to back up a little bit. I know you attended Maui High School.

SF: Right.

MK: Tell us about your participation in extra-curricular activities there, like student government.

SF: Yeah. Well, I was one of the ones that you could say was active in student government. Held, you know, class officer positions. During my senior year we started, at Maui High School, something called the student court. And that was---the idea there was to try to adjudicate the activity of students who may have misbehaved in one way or the other. And I was, I don't know, I think I was elected a judge. And Hannibal Tavares, who is now the mayor of the county of Maui, he was the prosecutor. And so he prosecuted. Now, Hannibal, you know, his uncle was Nils Tavares, who was a very well-known attorney in Honolulu. And Hannibal

probably had a lot more of a picture of what a lawyer did and what a courtroom was like. As I indicated before, I, when I went to law school, went to law school without really any idea of what a lawyer does. I had not been in a courtroom before that, and I went there sort of blind, really. (Chuckles)

Simply because I wanted to change my vocation. I'll tell you that later on, but, Hannibal was the prosecutor, so we were very close, Hannibal and I, and some of the other people that are here today from high school days. Yoshinaga [Nadao "Najo" Yoshinaga] was one of our classmates in high school, and then [Judge Toshimi] Sodetani, who is, I think, now, the administrative judge or something in Honolulu. [Sodetani is a member of the Judicial Council.] He was also a classmate of ours. So we had several people like that, that even today, you know, although that was a long, long time ago, we still can say, well, we used to be together at one point. We're not really close in the sense that we associate with each other on a constant basis today, because I'm here, they're there, and that sort of thing.

MK: You know, in those days, did Maui High School and its teachers have a certain goal in having that kind of system where they had student government, courts? Do they want to inculcate something into the students?

SF: I don't know what was intended, and I don't really know how this student court thing evolved and who started it and who suggested it and how it worked out. But we kind of fumbled along, I think, and I guess, some of us just thought it was a good idea to have something like that and started it. We, our activities were not—we didn't have that much of courtroom activity. We had a few cases that came before us. But other than that, we, I don't think we did too much.

MK: I'm curious. What kind of infractions could students have back then?

SF: Smoking in the toilet or in the back of the school buildings. Playing hooky. Not reporting to class in time, that kind of thing. Very, when you think about it from today's standpoint, very innocuous kinds of, quote, crimes.

(Laughter)

WN: It seems like a liberal thing, in those days, to have a student court. I mean, it seems to me that back in those days . . .

SF: I guess the way worked out, though, the real important kind of offenses never came to us. It was just the minor kind of stuff that we were allowed to handle, I guess.

MK: Okay. And before we move on, I was wondering, did you have any early work experiences, during those days, when you were a teenager?

SF: What kind of experiences?

MK: Work experiences?

SF: Oh yeah. When you talk about work, you know just the other day, I was listening to a Geraldo [Rivera] program [TV talk show] where they had all these migrant workers, they

were talking, complaining about child labor and that sort of thing. Well, I started to work when I was ten years old. And we used to work—but this is only in the summer. But, I guess we worked because everybody else was working. And when I started to work, I was earning thirty-five cents a day, as a fourth-grader. But they used to---the plantation used to take us, and probably, when I reflect back on it right now, it probably was a good thing they took us because there was one summer when they had—the plantations could not afford to, or chose not to, hire student workers, and boy, the kids that were running around, they went wild. Wild in the sense that, we used to go and break into the school buildings. And we used to go and—I shouldn't tell you all these things.

(Laughter)

SF: I know, but we did those things. And but, oh, there was a time when we used to get the pineapple crates down from the pineapple train. We would get a hook on a rope and throw the—you know, there used to be a train that ran down from the upcountry area, all around Pā'ia, down to Kahului, where the cannery was, and we would go and get this hook, metal iron hook, with the rope tied to the end, and we'd throw it up and knock a whole stack of pineapples down, crates of pineapple. And once the train stopped after that, and they got a couple of men to chase us, and we ran and hid underneath the school building, (chuckles) hiding from them. Then we got the school—I mean, the camp police coming after us. We were reported. And we got down, they took us down to the train depot, oh, quite a—maybe about a dozen of us. And we got a good lecture. But that was it, just a good lecture. But, things like that. (Chuckles) So we were not---the kind of stuff we did, when you look at it right now, you would just laugh at, not the kind of things that happened that comes out in the paper, but nonetheless, there were things that were supposedly prohibited and we used to do those things. But that kind of stuff happens when you are idle, and that particular summer, that one summer that we were idle, those are the things that used to happen.

But from the time I was a fourth grader, I was ten years old, every summer, we'd go out to work. We'd get up early in the morning at 4:30 and have a quick breakfast the parents prepared, and then carried our lunch cans, go out to the field with whatever tools were required, whether it's hoe or cane knife, go out and work till about 3:00 in the afternoon. They would take us to the place where we're supposed to work, usually by truck or by train. They would take us out, we'd start working just about daybreak during the summer, and then they'd—when we finished, we had to walk home, (chuckles) see. So we would walk several miles, usually, because they would take us way out in the outside areas to work.

But we started earning about $.35 a day. And I remember my first month of work, I think, I worked about twenty-six days. We used to work Saturdays, too. Twenty-six days, I think I earned about $11.00 and some-odd cents. (The pay may have included some contract work—piecework—when we could have earned more than basic wages.) And our practice, at least in my family was, (if) you earn $11.35, you can keep the $.35 but the $11.00 had to be turned in to the parents. You know, any loose change, and they used to pay you in cash in those days. They (had) a little envelope, and the money is in there, and then you go and line up at the office, and then you tell them what your number was, *bangō* was, and they'd give you this one envelope with your earnings for the past month. And this was, I think I worked every summer since I was a fourth-grader, except for the one summer that I did not work. And there was no such thing as child labor laws, apparently, at that time.

(Oh,) one of the things that was important—see, we'd go to the labor station in the morning at about five o'clock in the morning, and we'd stand in a row. And you had to stand, the lowest—the shortest person at one end, and the tallest person at the other end. And the *luna* would come and they'd cut you off at a certain point. (He would say) anybody below here, you have to go home because you're too small. Strictly by size. And we all would go ahead and get pebbles and things underneath us, so we would stand on the pebbles to make ourselves look a little taller. And we had these straw hats that we used to use. We lift it way up on our heads, (chuckles), the top of our hat would be a little higher. (MK laughs.) But that's the way we used to do it. And then they would usually take the real small youngsters, you know, they would tell 'em, "Eh, we're sorry, you're too small, you have to go." And that's the way it worked out.

MK: Okay. And you know, what were your feelings about this work back then?

SF: Well, I think I would have to say that we felt happy that we were able to work and earn a few dollars. It was kind of fun, except in those very extreme days when they let you work in the pouring rain. They would say, "Well, you're out here, so might as well wait until the rain stops." Sometimes the rain never stops, and you're working out there. Then it gets a little miserable. But generally speaking, because everybody else is working, if you stayed home, you're not going to have any fun anyway, nobody to play with. You just go out anyway. And the few dollars always meant something for us. My mother, now, what she did was, she would very (meticulously) keep the money and put it in the bank account for me, and well, in her name and my name. And she did—I don't know whether the others did (it) the same way, what the practice was there, but in my family, with myself, my brother, and my sister, whatever we earned, we were able to keep the loose change, and anything else was turned over to them, but they never spent any of the money. They always put it in the bank account for us. And we knew that that's what they were doing.

MK: So were your parents saving up for your further education?

SF: Well, I think so. They always used to say that. That's why they're saving the money.

MK: What kind of aspirations did they have for you?

SF: Oh, for them, you know, it was important, we were constantly reminded of it, that we had to go to school. You (had) to go to school. We'll somehow do it so that we can afford it somehow, but (you've) got to go. There was no—very little ifs or buts. You had to go. And that's what we're working for, that's what we're struggling for. You're going to go to school. My family was like that. Now I don't know whether it was true in other families.

MK: Okay. And so now, you went through school, you went through the university, and you taught at Lahainaluna [High School], and Hilo High [School], I think, a total of six years. Then you decided to go to law school. Why did you decide to go into law?

SF: Well, in those days, the teachers did not get paid very well. Now, they don't get paid very well today, but proportionately, they get paid much, much better today. We started off working—when I started teaching at Lahainaluna, I was earning $110 a month. And out of the $110, I was sending $40 to my brother, who was in school at that time, to help with his expense. And the students that used to graduate at Lahainaluna, many of them would

immediately start working for some kind of defense project, and they would be earning a lot more than I was as a teacher. And so it got to a point where, you know, you're looking for some way of trying to earn more.

And I know in high school, when I went to Hilo High School, there was some agitation among the teachers to try to, well, demand a higher pay. And while at Hilo High School, I saw—I had a couple of friends of mine in high school who were the sole bread earners, and I saw how difficult a time they were having with one paycheck and trying to support a family. And I said to myself, I said, gee, I cannot go ahead doing this because—of course, at that time, I was not married yet, but I anticipated somewhere along the way, I would get married and perhaps have a family. And I said to myself, I cannot support a family this way. I'm going to have to do something. So it was a matter of trying to get into some kind of change somehow. Somehow, changing into something else.

I remember applying to be a police officer at that time, and I was told I was too short. You had to be five feet, nine inches, I think it was at that time, and I wasn't quite five feet, nine. I remember applying to be a probation officer in the courts, and then at that time I applied. I don't know what happened, but anyway, I didn't get a job. And then I thought to myself, well, if I went on from now and try to be, let's say, an engineer, I'm going to have to start practically all over from scratch. And I thought that, and I understood that if you went to law school, you could use whatever you had—I had already (an) education at UH—and just add the law school to it, and I could become a lawyer. Now, like I said, I didn't know very much about what a lawyer did, and I didn't even know what his income was, and I didn't know anything about a courtroom. But I decided, well, it's going to be a change, and it couldn't be worse than being a teacher, as far as income goes. So I decided, well, I'm going to somehow try to make it to law school, which I did.

So I applied to—and I didn't know very much about law schools, which are good and which are bad law schools. Well, I shouldn't say bad law schools, but which are the good law schools. And I had heard about Harvard. I heard about Michigan, and I had heard about—there was another school that I. . . . Anyhow, I applied to all three. And Michigan was the one that accepted me. The others didn't even reply. Well, one did reply afterwards, saying that they are not able to accept me. By that time, I had already made the provisions, well, applications, and arrangements to go to Michigan. So that's what I ended up doing. But that's the reason why I went to law school. Not because I liked law, not because I, well, I felt that I was going to be a good lawyer or anything, it's only that I felt that I needed to change my occupation somehow so that I can earn a little more than what I was doing as a teacher.

MK: And you went to Michigan Law School, and you graduated in 1951.

SF: [Nineteen] fifty-one, right.

MK: Oh, I guess, we'll end here, and we'll continue on another tape.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: The following is an interview with George Fukuoka. It's videotape number three.

MK: Okay. Let's see. This is videotape number three with Judge Fukuoka. Now we're saying that you went to Michigan Law School, graduated in 1951. We're wondering, were there others from Hawai'i also going to law school at that same time?

SF: You know, as far as law school, now, I don't know how many from Hawai'i were in law school at that time. But there were a lot of Hawai'i students in the school itself, and we used to have a Hawai'i club which was a fairly large club now. One of our councilwomen right here is Velma McWayne. She was in law—she's Velma Santos right now—but she was in law, not law school, she was in the college at that time. Governor George Ariyoshi was in law school. He came, I think, a year after we started law school. He used to---I was married in law school, and I know he dropped in occasionally to have rice with us and *ochazuke* with us. So, I know him quite well, and there were quite a few others from Hawai'i in law school. Michigan used to be a very popular law school for Hawai'i people. But about twenty years after I graduated, when I went back to Michigan and checked in to see how many lawyers, how many law students were from Hawai'i, I think there was only one that I remember. So at that time, somehow, as far as the Hawai'i students go, Michigan stopped being one of the favorite law schools. I guess the students all went somewhere else.

The funny thing about law school, after one year at law school, I was having such a miserable time. I had been out of school now for six years, I'd been teaching for six years, I had such a miserable time in law school, that I went to—they had a special department at Michigan, the psychology department, that would give you some kind of testing, and advise you on vocations and that sort of thing for Michigan students, see. So I went there, and I said, "Listen, this is what I've done. I've been in law school now for a year. I'm not doing particularly well, although I'm not flunking, but I'm wondering whether I should continue. Some of my people that I know have quit law school. They've gone back because they felt that it was not something that they want to continue. Now, I want to know whether you can advise me as to whether I should stay or not." And they gave me a battery of tests for about three days. Afterwards, they said, "Well," they said, "We find that your aptitude and inclinations are best as a social studies teacher." And I've never taught social studies in school. The time that I taught, I taught mostly algebra and science subjects, chemistry, physics. "And then," says, "the second best, is for you to go into industrial relations work," which is completely foreign, and I didn't even know what that was, really. "But your third best, and this is a really a close one, two, three, is for you to be in law." So their recommendations was, by all means, continue law school. And on that basis, I continued. I was ready to quit at that point because, like I said, there were a couple of other people who had quit, too. They went there to law school, they thought law was for them, and they stayed a year, and then they gave up because they felt that it was not for them. But it's really funny how things work. (Chuckles)

But for them to say that my best occupation would be as a teacher of social studies, now how they got that, I don't know, because like I say, I've never taught social studies. Furthermore, in high school, all the subjects that would be related to social studies, science and social studies and that sort of thing—not science, but English and social studies—were my lousy subjects. I was strongest, I thought, in math and science. And yet, they said, "No, no, no. Your inclination and aptitude should be in social studies." Isn't that something? Another one of those funny things that happens which, you know, I could have gone either way at that

time.

Of course, I got married when I was a freshman in law school. I was in law school, Jane was over in New York. She was trying to get her master's in social work at Columbia [University]. And that Christmas, the first Christmas, one of the law school students that I was hanging around with (Robert Fukuda) says, "Hey, let's go to New York and just see what it's like. I have some friends out there." I didn't know any friends in New York, but I said, "Okay, I'll go with you," which I did. And I had a suitcase full of law books that I took to New York. (Chuckles) So I went there, and that's when I, well, actually, I knew Jane before. We were classmates in UH But we decided that we would get married at that time. So when she finished her one year at Columbia, she came to Michigan. We got married in Michigan. Another one of the little things that happens which affects a person tremendously. The Japanese say that, for a woman, especially, marriage is one of the big turning points, one way or the other. They say that getting born is one thing, and the next stage, the next important thing is when you get married and whom you get married to, and that can change your life completely, one way or the other. But anyway, that's what . . .

(Laughter)

MK: I think Warren had a question.

WN: I just wanted to ask, did you have any idea of what you were going to do with a law degree while you were at Michigan?

SF: I had no idea, really. I was just going through, struggling through the courses, trying to pass the courses, and because of lack of any experience, practical experience in areas concerning law, I really had no idea, really. And I consider myself very fortunate that the way everything turned out, at least there was some place for me. When I came back from law school, at that time, positions in law were very, very difficult to find. I went around trying to find some kind of clerk position, law clerk position, with the government in Honolulu. And at that time, I had intended to stay in Honolulu because Jane is from Honolulu. And went to some of these firms, bigger firms, asking for positions. There was nothing that was available.

And then, finally, I heard that on Maui, there was a position that was opening up or had opened up. So I came back to Maui, and sure enough, was hired on Maui as one of the prosecutors. At that time, they had three attorneys in the whole staff in Maui county. They had the county attorney, his assistant, and I was going to be the second assistant. And so I came back to Maui by myself. Jane was working in Honolulu, with Child and Family Services, and she joined me later on after I had spent a few months here on Maui. But, and even at that—so I started off as a prosecutor—but even at that, I had no idea, really, very—well, not no idea, (but) very little idea of what a prosecutor did.

You know, today, they must have---one of my sons is a prosecutor. The prosecutor's office has twenty-some-odd attorneys. And the other office, the county attorney's office, has another, I forget, twelve or so attorneys. So you can just imagine how much of a change there has been between the time when we did everything, three of us, did everything. Well, there was very little to do, apparently, otherwise we would never have been able to do it.

MK: And in those days, who was the county attorney and first deputy county attorney?

SF: Well, the county attorney was a person named Harold Dupont. He gets elected as a county attorney, those days. Now, today, we get there, and this is on Maui island, Maui county, the county attorney, the prosecutor is appointed, and so is the county attorney. Corporation counsel, we call it now. But in those days, Harold Dupont was elected. His deputy was Tom Ogata. Again, we have Ogata coming into the picture. And then I took over as the third position there as the [deputy] county attorney.

MK: And as deputy county attorney, were you—how were you selected? How would you get into that position?

SF: Just as an appointment by, I guess in this case, Harold was the one, Harold Dupont was the one who appointed me. And I guess it was his—he had the authority to hire somebody once the position was set up. And so I was hired. I didn't have to go to anybody else to get the position, though.

MK: And Harold Dupont would be the husband of Dee Dupont?

SF: Yeah. Dee used to be a senator [member of the house, 1951–54; elected to the senate 1954] at one time. Well, I don't know too much about what happened with Dee, but Dee used to work as a forelady at the cannery [supervisor at Maui Pineapple Co.]. And she got, I think she got somehow involved with the union activity, at that time, they were trying to organize the workers. And somehow, she kind of sided with the union people. And then she decided she's going to run for office, and then the union supported her. And she got in to be a senator. She stayed a senator for, I forget, how long. I know I served with her, but I don't remember, exactly, how long she was. . . .

MK: So Harold Dupont was a Democrat, then, like his . . .

SF: Yeah, he was a Democrat.

MK: Okay. You know, at that time when you got into the attorney's office, were you active in any politicking on the island?

SF: No, I was not. In fact, I'm a very, I was a very neutral kind of person. Apolitical person, I guess, you'd call it. Just like my wife is right now. She doesn't like to mess around with politics. No. I was not active at all in politics. If you can call it politics, I know when I was in college at the university, one year, I don't remember the details, but I remember one of the persons I lived with, and we used to live in a setup called students' house, where actually, there were some people who are other than students living there. But one of the persons was very active in trying to organize the workers. And I do remember going out one night with him to pass around brochures downtown someplace. Like I say, I don't remember the details, but this is one of these, you know, leaflets that you pass around to try to get people organized.

Now, of course, the workers' situation was not foreign to me because I came out of the plantation, and I realized how discriminatory some of these actions by the plantations were. I had a friend of mine who used to work in an office after high school, and he was working side by side with another person, a *Haole* person. And the *Haole* person—they did the same work, but the *Haole* person was getting twice what he was getting, this other person, my

friend was getting, and that sort of thing. So I knew that things were not what they should be in the plantations. Although, when I was younger, I used to accept that as one of the facts of life.

So when people started approaching me in terms of the workers' rights, and what you can do for workers, now those things, of course, struck a bell with me because of my background. So whatever politicking I did, I guess, began with the idea of trying to give more to workers, trying to get the workers (a) better break, and that sort of thing. So I was aligned rather closely with the union people from the very beginning. Once there was a kind of a blur between union activities and politics, at that time. And if anything, aside from the usual political kind of things, I was more a worker kind of thing, union kind of thing. I was more inclined towards what the unions were asking, than for more abstract kind of political issues. I was not too much involved in that. At least in the beginning, I was not.

MK: So when you were a student, this person that you were going out passing leaflets with, was that Johnny Akau?

SF: No. No, no, no. John was also, you know, he was. . . . You see, John, wanted to start this students' house thing, and he came over to Maui, and he talked to people like me and to Kase Higa, trying to get us to agree to go down with him to live at this thing that he was trying to get set up, this students' house. And he was, I guess at that point, he was a YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] kind of worker, rather liberal ideas, and not only in workers, but in other areas, too. And he was, if you can call it that, he was our leader at that time. But I don't think that he ever involved us in politics.

But he would go ahead and make arrangements to get our old rickety house right there, very low rental, and he would get all his out-island people, students in there, those who could not afford too much. I know we used to pay ten dollars a month to live there, and we would get our bunk and the food, albeit, things like (chuckles) cucumber salads and stuff like that. I mean, cucumber sandwiches, things like that. But we lived there for about ten dollars a month, all these people. And the rental was not high because the house itself was very run-down, and we would have, perhaps, you know, two toilets, and about twenty-two people living in one house, I remember at one point. And even washing up in the morning before going to school was a real problem because everybody has to go to school (at) a certain (time)—we had to make schedules up. You got ten minutes, from 7:00 to 7:10 is your time, and from 7:10 to 7:20 is somebody else's time. That's the way we had to work. But, yes, Johnny was a liberal, and typically young college students (had) all these idealistic perceptions about things. And I remember we used to discuss things way into the night, when we should be studying, about all these liberal, new ideas. But he never involved us in politics, no.

This is another person who was working in Waikīkī, was a cook, I think, in Waikīkī. And he, I don't know how he got into politics, but he dragged me out one night, he said, "Eh, come on. Help me pass these things out." And you know, we used to go out into town. Actually into the—not Waikīkī, but into the center of town, King Street and that area, Fort Street area, to pass these leaflets around in the middle of the night. (Chuckles) But that's the only thing I remember then. But then, of course, when I started teaching in high school at Lahainaluna, I also got involved with the union activity there. Friends like, you know, Lanny Morisaki [member of the County of Maui Board of Supervisors, appointed in '59, elected '60, '62, '64 and '66], now. He was there working for the cannery at that time, and, so I got to know him

at that time. And . . .

MK: Shall we stop here and continue on the next tape?

WN: Okay.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is a continuation of the George Fukuoka interview. This is videotape number four.

MK: Okay, this is tape number four with Judge Fukuoka, and you were just telling us about Lanny Morisaki and your activities at Lahainaluna.

SF: Right. At that time, I kind of helped, not organize, but I did a little, small little things here and there as a teacher. I was still a teacher, though. But on my off time, I would meet with Lanny folks, and they would discuss how the organizing is going, and I would put my two-bits piece in there, and then when they got into politics, and for the first time in 19. . . . When was it now, they started getting out in (politics)—about 1942, about 1942, '43, '44, '42, I guess—that I started helping them, getting involved in the political aspect of things. And I remember I helped drive voters to the poll on election day. And I guess the fact that I was a teacher, albeit the young teacher, must have helped a little bit as far as the political, the way other people viewed the Democrats and the political activity. But I did that during that time, so at that point, I was just slightly, now, beginning to get involved in politics. But then, when I went to Hilo three years later, I was, again, out of politics. I was not involved in politics. But that was a time when the teachers were getting a little aroused about trying to get their demands of pay raises. And I do remember getting, at least identified with a group of people who were, group of teachers, who were willing to walk out of school if necessary to try to get a little more pay. And that's when the question of pay became kind of critical in my mind, and as I said earlier, that's one of the reasons why I left teaching.

MK: Okay. And now, we're going to move you up forward to the time you were, you got into the county attorneyship. You became county attorney, and then soon after, maybe a year later, you were appointed to the Hāna district magistrate?

SF: Mm hmm. Well, I should correct you first. Now, I wasn't the county attorney. I was just one of the deputies in there. Harold Dupont was the county attorney. I was in the county attorney's office for just a few months when somebody told me that it would probably be better if you—no, nobody told (me) that, actually, I told myself that it would probably be better if I can get an appointment as a district magistrate in Hāna, then I can try opening my own office and try to do what I can, because at that time, we still had not started our family, we had no family. Jane was still working, and I felt that it'd be a good time for me to test myself, so to speak, out in private practice. So I got appointed as a magistrate in Hāna, a position that was open, and I opened up a small little office in Wailuku. And then I continued that way for a couple of years. And that is when it started off, close to the 1954 elections. And that's when people from both sides of the political fence started approaching me, trying to get me [to] run for some kind of office for, you know, either as a Republican or as a Democrat. Now, people like Toshi [Toshio] Ansai, [in 1954, Ansai was a territorial senator] who's a Republican, there was a Toshi Enomoto [Toshio G. N. Enomoto], who used to be a

kind of a prominent Republican, they're (the) only non-*Haole* Republicans, now. And they're the ones that came over to see me.

And on this other side, of course, I'd have some of these other people coming around trying to get me to run for office as a Democrat. And I really had no great inclination to run for office, at that time. I did not want to, really, and Jane, more so, did not want me to run. But somewhere along the way, I got persuaded, I guess, to run, but I guess mostly it was because the union people said that this is the way you can help. You know, this is the way you can help the workers the most, by being an elected official. Otherwise, you don't have very much say-so in what happens. And I realized that there was truth to that, so I think I finally decided that I'm going to run, but I didn't want to get off the island of Maui, so I ran for the board of supervisors. And I fortunately got in on my first try there. And that's how my political career, if you want to call it that, started.

MK: You know, I was wondering, when people like Toshi Ansai, and G. N. Enomoto came to see you, what was their pitch as Republicans to get you into their party?

SF: Well, of course, it was very obvious that as a Republican, you're going to be aligned with all this plantation bosses, owners of the plantation, that hierarchy there. But their pitch was, you can do more for your people, for the people you want to help, by being on this side which has the power. And at that time, they had the power. "You could do more for them by joining us than if you went the other way." And that was basically the way in which they tried to get me to run as a Republican. But with my feelings the way were and the fact that the union [ILWU, International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union] people, the workers were all aligned on the Democrats' side, there was just no way I could run as a Republican at that point.

MK: And what role did Najo [Nadao Yoshinaga] have in getting you into the Democratic union side?

SF: Well, Najo came back to Maui as a representative of Bouslog and Symonds which was a labor union that represented, I mean, which was the attorneys that represented the labor union. And we had our offices are close to each other, so we used to come around and have coffee together and chew the fat a lot in those days. And of course, he was a very, very strong labor person, not as much as I was. I felt strongly for labor, but not to the extent that he did. He was very, very strong. And I guess, in all of our, you know, discussions of things, we kind of got to a point when we were able to agree on most of the things that were discussed. And I guess that's the influence, if any. But he was always a political animal. He was strong labor, he was always a political animal. He would be willing to spend all his spare time going around cultivating political relationships and contacts. And that's why he's very effective as a politician. He spends a lot of time doing it.

MK: And so when you were approached to run for office, you had to go out there and start cultivating some voters?

SF: Yeah, because I was, even now, I don't think I'm really the kind of person who likes—I'm not an extrovert. I'm an introvert, if anything at all. And I've never really took to politics. I was always sort of being dragged, you know, by somebody pulling my ear and saying, "Eh, do this and do that," and I never really enjoyed politics in the sense that other people did. I

would just as well not be in any kind of political limelight. I'll be happy in that kind of position.

WN: Besides Najo Yoshinaga, who else were the people who kept pushing or encouraging you to run for politics?

SF: Well, not, there were not—in the beginning, there were not that many people. You know, I had to pretty well decide on deciding to run, and deciding which party to run for or under. I pretty well had to decide by myself. I don't think we had—I had too much pressure in the beginning. I had friends that, like I say, Lanny [Morisaki], for instance, he's a labor person. And I, my sympathies were all with that type of people, and perhaps that influenced me, but very few of them really came out and said, "Eh, please run for office," sort of thing. They pretty well left it up to me. The only people who really came specifically to talk to me about it was just Najo and the two Toshis [Ansai and Enomoto]. I don't remember anybody else, really, coming to ask me to run. At least, not the first time. Later on, I had other people, yeah.

WN: Tom Yagi, was he involved at all?

SF: Tom never directly talked to be about running for office, no. Although I had a lot of associations with him, not in the beginning. It's later on when, you know, there's a question of whether I should be running. I wanted to stay on the county basis, staying on the board or the council. And others wanted me to move to Honolulu, and I didn't want to go to Honolulu. That's when you have different pressures from other people, that try to get me to move to Honolulu.

MK: So in '54, you ran for the board and you were able to stay on Maui. Then in '56, you ran for the territorial senate. How did you get involved in that race?

SF: Well, that's when, you know, people like John Burns, people like well, Najo continued, of course, to get me to run for the Honolulu seat. By that time, of course, both Toshis were not in a position to talk to me about anything like this. I know [Masaru] "Pundy" Yokouchi was very much active in politics, or beginning to get very much active in politics. Now, he's one of the guys that came and talked to me. You know, people like Harold Dupont, to whom I owed at least my first job. He would talk also. I don't know whether David Trask was around at that time, but he would be another person that, somewhere in the later stages, would urge me to run for the legislature instead of council. So I did run, yeah, in '56, and then '59, I think, I ran again, that's after statehood.

MK: And how did you get convinced to run?

SF: I'm a kind of weak person, that's why.

(Laughter)

SF: I don't like it, and my wife doesn't like it, but I just kind of felt like that perhaps what they said was right, and perhaps there is something that I could do. I guess it's a little bit of ego that comes out. But basically, I'm not a politician, you know, I'm really not a politician.

MK: So what did you have to do to campaign, then, back in those days for the senate seats? What was involved?

SF: Well, one of the things, of course, that I think helped me get elected, see, I taught at Lahainaluna for three years, and apparently, I had enough of a reputation, if you can call it that, in Lahaina so that I always pulled strongly in Lahaina, just by virtue of the fact that, I think, I taught there for three years, and the fact that perhaps I was engaged in some kind of political activity, albeit on a very small scale during the time that I was at Lahaina, and of course, the workers there in Lahaina would probably remember me because of that. That's one thing.

Another thing, you know, in those days, politics, running for politics was very inexpensive. I don't think I spent more than $2[,000] or $3,000 the first time I ran for office. And basically, it was only to print little brochures of myself. And then, what I did, the first time I ran, was to personally and through my family, mail out a simple letter, printed letter, asking for support. Now, I don't think that was done in those days. And then I walked the central Maui area from house to house, and people told me that I was the guy who started this business of going house to house and how much of a burden it became because everybody else had to follow me. But I started doing that the first time. And that's about all we did. And of course, in those days, we used to have these rallies, political rallies, that they would go from Hāna, and Ke'anae, and we would have a little, and you know, it was kind of a big show. People came out, and in those days, a lot of people used to come out just to watch. There was no TV or anything that people could watch. So they would come out. And we made some, I guess, contact that way. But it was a very inexpensive kind of campaigning. Today, when they talk about hundreds of thousands of dollars to campaign, I think, holy mackerel. Raising the money is, first of all, a big problem, you know, raising that kind of money.

MK: So back in those days, to get your $2,000, what would you have to do?

SF: I think we spent our own money. I did. There were some contributions, but not enough to cover the $2,000.

MK: So it came out of your family finances then to run.

SF: That's right.

WN: You said that your wife, you know, was sort of against politics. Was she active in helping you in campaigning?

SF: To the extent of if I had to mail something, she would help me stuff envelopes. She did used to go out with me to some of the rallies to be seen with me. And you know, when you go to these rallies, before the rally starts, you have all these people, you go around and meet the people who are there, and she would go around with me. I think she helped me the first time when I was passing out these brochures. She helped me pass those around from house to house. But she did not want to really go out and do some of the political things that political wives do. She was just not interested in doing that.

MK: Then too, you also had a growing family, I think.

SF: Yeah. That's the part of it also. But from the start, and even now, she doesn't like too much of that kind of thing where you have to go out and talk to people about political issues.

WN: What about like Moloka'i and Lāna'i, I know Maui county encompasses those, too. Did you ever have to go there to campaign?

SF: Yes, we used to always go to Lāna'i and to Moloka'i. Now, in Lāna'i—and I used to do well in Lāna'i because my sister lived there and she was able to help me. And then in Moloka'i, well, in Lāna'i, too, one summer I had gone to Lāna'i to work. And during that time, I got to know some of the people. And then Moloka'i—now two summers I went to Moloka'i to work in the pineapple fields. And I was able to have some kind of contact there, plus the fact that my brother—when I was in this political campaigning period, my brother was teaching at Moloka'i High School. And he and his wife, I think, helped quite a bit. So Moloka'i was always a good place for me. Lāna'i was always a good place. The really strong areas were, like I said, Lahaina, Lāna'i and Moloka'i. They were good areas for me. Kahului was very strong for me, and Wailuku because, like I said, the first time I ran, I went walking through the whole area.

WN: Why don't we change tapes.

MK: Yeah, okay.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 17-52-1-90; SIDE ONE

JC: The following is a continuation of the George Fukuoka interview. This is videotape number five.

WN: We have tape five with Mr. George Fukuoka. I was wondering, you know, from '54, you ran and you were on Maui as the board of supervisors. Then in '56, you ran for the senate and got elected, and you had to spend a lot of time in Honolulu. What was it like, you know, making the move to Honolulu for the session?

SF: It was not a very happy kind of situation, you know, having to run back and forth. Especially in my case, I had to carry on a practice of some kind, although it was a very small practice, but I still had to come back occasionally. I had to come back to see my family. So it was a constant running back and forth kind of thing. And I stayed there only because my friends felt that I should. But the first chance I had, which was after 1960—'54, no, '64, that I came back to the board because I had enough of Honolulu at that point.

MK: You know, when you were in Honolulu during sessions, where did you stay? We were wondering, how did neighbor island legislators manage and who do they hang out with?

SF: Let's see now. I stayed in several different places. Some of the time, I stayed with relatives in Honolulu. A couple of times, we rented apartments and stayed in Honolulu in these rented apartments. Sometimes two of us getting together and staying there. But financially, it was

very difficult for us to stay at a hotel because it was so much more expensive that way. So we tried to make do with the least amount of expense. I don't quite remember what our income was. Our income was $1,500 for the short session and $2,500 for the long session, you know, where you stay three months, and there was a short session when you stayed about a month and a half. And that was, you had about $1,500 for that. And all in all, financially, it was a real burden. At least for me it was. And that's part of the reason why I decided I didn't want to stay in Honolulu, so I came back in '64.

MK: You know we interviewed Nelson Doi a while back. And he was telling us that he felt that neighbor island legislators did their homework much better than O'ahu legislators because that's all they had to do when they were on O'ahu.

SF: Well, that's the part of the problem, too. When you're in Honolulu, in our case, there wasn't really very much that you could do. So you spent your time either with legislators or you go home and you—or stay in the office and do some studying. And I think there's a lot of truth in that, too, yeah.

MK: Also in terms of numbers, back in those days, the neighbor island legislators, the senators were more numerous than . . .

SF: Oh, yeah.

MK: . . . than the O'ahu.

SF: Oh, yeah. We had, I think, out of twenty, we had---let's see. We started off fifteen senators, and out of fifteen, nine, I think, were from the neighbor islands. So, we, in terms of power, we had a lot more power in those days, as neighbor islanders. So we were able to command, if we could stick together, we were able to command more of the lucrative positions—lucrative, not in financial terms but in power—the powerful positions in the senate.

MK: You know that when you were in the territorial senate, William [Bill] Heen was senate president. Can you tell us about him, a little bit?

SF: Well, I really don't know too much about Bill Heen. He was one of the old-time politicians, and we had—I remember the presidents, Bill Heen was one, and then Herb [Herbert] Lee was another one. And of course, "Doc" [William C.] Hill was another one. Doc was a very much more colorful person. Bill Heen, I don't know too much about really. I did not have too much direct contact with him.

MK: How about, what do you remember about Doc Hill?

SF: Well, I remember him, you see he was a Republican, so much of the decision making was not done without consultation. You know, it was done by him and his group. He was a, like I say, a very colorful kind of person, colorful character. But not much else, really. We knew, we all knew that he was a very wealthy person. But not much else.

MK: Okay. And then during those early years in the territorial senate, how close did you get to, what people now call, the Burns [John "Jack" Burns] group? Were you very close to the Burns group or not that well acquainted?

SF: Well, I don't really know what you mean by the Burns group, but I was close to people like, now, Mike Tokunaga. He's actually a Maui boy. So is . . .

WN: Dan Aoki.

SF: . . . Tadao Beppu. Dan Aoki was a Maui boy. So there was a nucleus of Maui people with John Burns. And John Burns used to come here on campaign times. And he used to spend the last, the night before election, the last campaign, I mean, the rally, here. And he used to spend the first rally. We always started out in Ke'anae and Hāna. He would come here especially. And I kind of think like, you know, he had a little extra something about Maui that he would do that. But invariably, when we had these rallies going on, he would come here. The first rallies, Ke'anae, Hāna, he would come out. And the last one in Wailuku, he would come. Now, on Maui, now, of course, the Burns group, I would imagine, included people like Najo [Nadao Yoshinaga] and [Masaru "Pundy"] Yokouchi. Now both of them are people that were close to me. And then you talk about this, the close people in Honolulu with Dan [Aoki] and Mike [Tokunaga] and Tadao Beppu, then you can say that, I guess I was kind of close to them. And I had a lot of respect for Jack Burns.

WN: Did you do any kind of campaigning for Burns on Maui when he was running for office?

SF: Oh, yeah, yeah. A large part of our campaigning was not a kind of a personal thing, vote for me kind of thing. It was more, vote for the Democrats. And there was one year when I, even, not really managed but co-managed Jack Burns' campaign here. I forget what year it was, but [Yoshikazu "Zuke"] Matsui and I co-managed the campaign. So I would say that, you know, I was as close as, not the very inner core, but certainly on the fringes.

MK: Okay. And let's see. I know that you were in the state senate from '59 to '64. By then, we're a state. What issues really concerned you as a senator from Maui?

SF: See, that's where I'm not a real politician. There was no issue that I particularly felt like was my issue, something that I want to carry forward. My general slant on politics was, I don't have any personal thing that I want to accomplish. I would be willing, when I'm in the senate, lend an ear to any kind of issue, and to use my judgement and to use my persuasion, if I can have any of that, towards what I felt was right. But I would not call myself a kind of politician that goes in saying, "I—this is going to be my primary issue for this session and I'm going to want to do this, or I'm going to want to do this." No. And that, I think, is an illustration to the fact that I'm not really a politician.

WN: You told us earlier that you used to help other politicians with their speeches or something like that? I vaguely remember that.

SF: I don't remember saying that.

MK: I think Senator [Mamoru] Yamasaki had mentioned that Judge Fukuoka advised him.

SF: Well, we used to advise each other about different things, what to say, and how to say it, and we would critique one another, but I didn't used to write speeches like that.

WN: Well, you know, you're a very articulate person, and I was just wondering if, in terms of

speeches, was that your strong suit?

SF: Well, it may be that people would present a written speech to me and say, "Hey, would you look it over and see what you can say about it?" I may make some changes in grammar, maybe in a few words here and there, but not really write speeches for them, no. I didn't.

MK: Okay. And another thing I want to ask you about the time you were in the senate. In the '62, '63 period, there was a lot of factionalism between the so-called [Nelson] Doi group and the [Kazuhisa] Abe group. Or sometimes, the Abe group was called the [Nadao] Yoshinaga group. How did you view that factionalism? [Assessed in *Hawai'i's Democrats* as a personal bid for power prompted by reapportionment issues. Doi was defeated by Abe for senate president after the 1963 elections.]

SF: Well, I don't—I know there was that faction. There was a lot of bad feelings, I think, between those two groups. Well, particularly between Judge Doi, and perhaps, one or two of the other people in the other opposite group. But I tried not to be too partisan about being in one group or the other. I was in, if you can, if you want to say so definitely, I was in the group with Najo [Yoshinaga]. But I tried not to be too strident about my positions about things. But I don't know, other than that, I don't think I played any major role.

MK: And another . . .

SF: Nelson, you see, Nelson and I have been friends for a long time because, see, Nelson was at students' house, too, when I was in college. He was two or three years below me at that time. But you see all these things coming back, all kinds of connections here and there. (Chuckles)

MK: So Nelson Doi was at student house, too?

SF: Yes, he was.

MK: Maybe that's where we had first heard about student house and Johnny Akau. Okay.

SF: Even at that time, Nelson, himself, was a very aggressive kind of person, you know. He's the kind that wants to go out and do things. I'm a kind of laid-back kind of person, "Well, okay, let's do it if you want to do it." That sort of thing.

WN: You know, you seem to—it seems to me that you were more or less a neutral senator, politician, I mean, not really taking one stand or the other.

SF: I would say so. I would say that in political issues, I would have feelings, but I'm not the kind that wants to go ahead and you know, try to do this and do that. If people ask me which side will you take, I would tell them, maybe well, I would favor this side or that side. And if I had to vote, I would know where to vote. But I'm not the kind who goes out campaigning to, you know, carry issues through. That's why I say I'm not a politician, really.

WN: Do you feel that you were approached more by people from both sides on issues because they knew that you were, you know, you were . . .

MK: Open.

WN: . . . you didn't make your—yeah, you were open?

SF: No, I didn't have any sense of that. No, I don't think that necessarily came about that way. But I was, I am, by nature, somebody who doesn't like to jump to one side and stay there or jump to the other side. I try to, try and stay in between. And try to make decisions as I go along.

WN: So you were judge material from way back then. (Chuckles)

SF: Well, I don't know. I don't know about that.

MK: Okay. Let's see. We know that in '64, you resigned to run for the Maui board, and you told us why you did that, and you were on the Maui board for a while. When you talk about Maui county politics, the name [Edward F.] Eddie Tam always comes up. At that time, he was mayor. Can you kind of give us your opinion or assessment of Eddie Tam as mayor?

SF: Well, Eddie was a real extrovert. One of the things that impressed me about Eddie Tam was that he could remember names that I would never be able to remember. He would go to Honolulu—well, it doesn't have to be Honolulu. He would maybe go to, let's see, once I went on a county, some kind of convention or something in San Diego. And he would just come, go to the hotel, sit down, and start dialing all kinds of numbers, you know, and talking to—"Hi, how are you, and I'm here and this is what we're doing," and he was like that. Now, my brother (Masami Fukuoka) tells me that once he was impressed because he met Eddie once, some time ago, and then much later, when he was able to see Eddie again, Eddie told him, "Eh, you're Masami Fukuoka," and that sort of thing, and telling him where he met him and that sort of thing. And my brother said he was just flabbergasted that he could remember all those things. And Eddie was that kind of person. He made an effort to remember other people, other people's names.

Now, as an administrator, he was just an easygoing person. I don't think that he. . . . He just enjoyed his position, but he was not necessarily somebody who managed things well. But you cannot help but like that guy, you know. You can criticize him and he would just laugh it off, and he's just a real likeable person. That's all.

MK: What was his base of support? What was the base of his popularity? He was in for so long.

SF: Well, because of the type of person he is, you know. He would remember people's names, he would be friendly with everybody, used to call himself the friendly Eddie. He was friendly with everybody. Very little of looking down at persons. He was just a nice Joe.

MK: Very likeable and very electable.

SF: Very likeable, and because of that, I think, very electable.

MK: Okay.

WN: That's about the assessment that most people have told us, given us.

MK: Okay, shall we switch to the last tape and then we'll just . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: The following is a continuation of the George Fukuoka interview. This is the last tape and this is videotape number six.

MK: Okay. So this is tape number six, interview with Judge Fukuoka. We've gotten up to 1966, and we want to find out what happened that year with the state senate, how you got into the race?

SF: Well, in '66, of course, I was still in the Maui county council at that time. I'm not quite sure how it turned out that I was, I ended up running for office again, but generally, I do remember a lot of pressure being placed on me by my friends, you know, people like Kase Higa and [Masaru] "Pundy" Yokouchi. They would come to my home, talk to me. Lanny [Morisaki] talked to me. My wife says that Jack Burns called her and talked to her about it because they thought that she was the primary objection, she was the primary obstacle to my running for office. And as she mentioned now, I don't remember the historical details, but if it's true that Toshi Ansai and "Doc" [James F.] Fleming were aligned for the two senate positions on the Republican side, and David Trask was one of the people on the Democrat side, then I think the real fear was that if David Trask and John Duarte ran together, they would both lose to Toshi and to Doc Fleming. And they felt that with me running with David Trask, that would present a better combination than with John Duarte and David Trask. So, I guess they persuaded John not to run for the senate, although that may not have been very easy because John was, well, he had been in the senate for so many years that. . . . But I guess, they convinced John that it would be for the good of everybody if I ran, and that he should run for the house instead.

So, there was a lot of pressure brought on me to run, and it wasn't until, I think, the very last moment that I decided okay, I'll go ahead and run. But I held off for a long, long time. And I don't know what, what kind of arguments being used, but, oh, they must have told me, you know, for the good of the party and that sort of thing, you should, and make this the last time, and all kinds of things like that, I guess, although I don't really remember what the details were of, you know, what they said, or how they said it, what was presented to me to make me run. But I think it was the last minute, the very last minute that we decided that, okay, I'll go run. So, the filing, there was a little problem with the filing, I think, of my nomination papers because the time was so short. But anyway, I ran, and again, I was fortunate in getting elected.

MK: And at that time, I think it was Toshio Ansai and yourself that were elected.

SF: In the senate, right.

MK: I was wondering, you know, Toshi Ansai has been in politics for a long, long time. A Republican, industrial relations man. In your assessment, how did Ansai continue to win election after election?

SF: Well, Toshi, he is a good politician, Toshi is. He was on the Republican side, true. But he did a lot of things for the Democrats. He was not one of these real one-sided kind of person. And the fact that he's, first of all, a real friendly, nice person, the fact that he got the Republican support, plus, I guess, the fact that many of the—well, many of the labor people

who continue to support him. See, Toshi is not only a Republican and worked for plantation, he's also an AJA [American of Japanese ancestry], you know—AJA, meaning that he spent time in the war. He's also a Catholic. And all kinds of combinations there that helps him. And when I say Catholic, I'm talking not only from the religious standpoint, but also from the fact that the people who are Catholics are people who come from all other types of ethnic backgrounds. And so, he gets all this support, so that when you combine all those things together, he was a strong political vote getter.

MK: You know, like on Maui, they say that the union from the fifties on has been a great power in terms of endorsements and helping candidates. For Toshio Ansai, though, the union never endorsed him.

SF: No. But, there were enough people who, enough of the members who felt highly enough about Toshi, that when it came to Toshi, they defected enough, so that was all these other things that I talked about, would be enough for him to get elected. He was always a strong vote getter.

MK: Okay. And when you were elected in '66, you became the chairman of the Maui select committee. And I was wondering if you could say something about the Maui select committee, in those days, the things that they tried to do.

SF: Well, the Maui select committee, really, is a committee which is only for Maui people, trying to do whatever you can to Maui. We always had a Maui select committee from way back, but in this case, when I was, you see, in the 1950. . . . I'm trying to remember when it was that were able to, I was able to get to be the chairman of the ways and means in the senate.

MK: That was . . .

SF: Was in '59 or . . .

MK: Fifty-nine. Yeah, '59, I think. Yeah.

SF: Well, that was the plum kind of thing, but you know, in all of these things, it's a kind of a bargaining process, you know, when the senators get together and they try to decide who was going to be what, and that sort of thing. It's a matter of give and take. You can give this and I can take this. And with me, it was never a kind of personal thing. I never really wanted to have any kind of committee. But, if my Maui colleagues say you got to take this committee, well, that's what I would eventually end up taking, whatever it might be. And the Maui select committee is a relatively minor committee, the way I looked at it. Because, all it did was look at Maui things. Maui wanted an airport, and a road here, and a school here, and a park here. So we go out and try to get those things, or which would you give priority to, and the Maui select committee would do that. And the Maui select committee had, really, had nothing else to do about anything else.

MK: Yeah, you mentioned you were ways and means chairman back in '59.

SF: No, in '59, I think in the judiciary.

MK: Wait, no, I think you were judiciary chairman in '63?

SF: Oh, maybe that was it [senate judiciary chair, 1963], I don't know.

MK: So actually, you were chair of two very powerful committees.

SF: At different times, yeah. But again, it was because in the bargaining process, the negotiating process, it was felt that I would be most acceptable. So, this, Maui wanted to have the ways and means. But then, from the standpoint of the others, they would say, well, we don't want Najo there, or we don't want so-and-so there, so it would end up me having to take it. It wasn't because I actively sought any of these positions. And like I say, I'm not one of those types of politician that actively goes out trying to get things done. But because they accepted me, I would end up being it, or for the judiciary chairman.

MK: So, you're in the senate from '66 until '68 when you're appointed to the bench.

SF: Yeah, in January of '68 is when I was appointed, and that's when I resigned from the senate, and that's when, I think, somewhere around that time when [Mamoru] Yamasaki got appointed in my position, and of course, I took over the bench in, I think, early February of '68.

MK: Did you, in any way, kind of seek an appointment to the bench or did it just come?

SF: I guess, if anything, I think I sought the bench. I did not expressly say that to the governor, and I did not expressly so state it to other people. But I think everybody assumed that that would be one of the things that any lawyer would want, and indeed, somewhere before I got to this bench, sometime earlier, I'm always asked whether I would be interested in the circuit court bench. And at that time, I discussed it with my wife, and we decided that, no, we're not going to move over to Honolulu. We're going to stay here. And by that time, Jane was enough of a Maui person, not to want to go back to Honolulu again. And then after that, when the position opened here, I was asked whether I would be interested. But to answer your question, I don't think I really actively, not actively, I don't think I expressly or ever asked the governor or any of his friends that I would want the position. But I did say that I'd be interested, I'm sure, if they asked.

Now, there's another story that goes with it. Way back when, when we were still in territorial status, when the union was active, I was asked once to write a letter to the court, Honolulu judge, Honolulu court, on behalf of Jack Hall [ILWU leader accused of being a Communist]. And Tom [Thomas] Yagi, I think, was the one who came, approached me, and says, "Would you, in the sentencing process, write a letter." And in those days, any person who wanted to be a judge, had to be approved by Washington [D.C.]. Had to be appointed and approved by Washington. And in those days, Dillingham (Walter, I believe) was the boss man in Washington. What Dillingham said, goes, you know. And I, at that time, felt that if I ever wanted to be a judge, by writing this letter, I would lose all possibility of ever being considered for the bench. But I did write the letter at that time. But that was, like I said, during the territorial days. Once you got to be a state, then, of course, the entire appointment process came to the local government.

WN: Asking an inevitable question, when they were trying to convince you to run for the senate in '66, did a judgeship ever come up, the possibility of you just going for two years and then moving into the judgeship so that the governor would be able to appoint your successor?

SF: I don't really remember anything like that being mentioned. But it could have been. I don't remember whether it was already obvious that there was going to be a vacancy. I think it may have been, I don't know. I don't really remember that.

WN: Do you remember ever having to deal with that, you know, if maybe the media or somebody came up to you to ask you that question?

SF: No, I don't remember anybody ever asking me that question. Certainly, not the media, which I'm sure that if that question came up, the media would have it down someplace. But it's possible, it sounds, the other people, like, for instance, I don't know whether Mike Tokunaga ever did, but if they did ask, I would have probably have said, yeah, I'd be interested. But I think, more than that, I don't think they ever asked as much as they kind of assumed that I would be, so that question never really came up in that way. Somebody asking, well, aren't you interested or are you interested sort of thing.

MK: So when you were appointed to the bench, you were appointed to the district court, is that correct?

SF: No, I was appointed to the circuit court.

MK: The circuit court bench.

SF: There was only one position, one judge, at that time. Now, we have three. But at that time, there was only one. I was appointed for a six-year term. And subsequently, I think, Governor [George] Ariyoshi appointed me for a ten-year term, although I didn't serve the full ten years. I just left after eight years.

MK: Okay. I think we're getting towards the end of the interview. Maybe as a closing question, we can ask you to just comment on politics past and present. A real general assessment.

SF: Well, like I say, politics now is getting to a point where unless the media helps you or you're able to get the media to somehow help you, you don't get elected anymore. The media has a tremendous influence, I think. And of course, being a good—somebody who appears well on television, that's very, very important today. A person who is not able to put on a good show in television, whether it's in terms of the news about him or whether in terms of you making (an) actual spiel, appearing well in the newspapers, and being treated well by the reporters, I mean, those are very, very important things now. And of course, along with that, I think, comes a lot of ability to raise cash. You need a tremendous amount of money these days to get elected. I don't think that's necessarily true for the house races, because you're running from a relatively small district. But even at that, I would hate to have to go through all of that to be elected. Maybe it's because I'm getting older now.

(Chuckles)

WN: As you look at your life, was there anything that you would have done differently? Are you satisfied with how things turned out?

SF: With my life?

WN: Mm hmm.

SF: Well, I don't know. I don't—well, let me put it this way. I've been extremely lucky in everything I've done. I've been very, very lucky, and I recognize the fact that luck has a lot to do with what happens to one's life. And every step that I've taken, it just seems like luck has been on my side. So I'm very satisfied with what has happened to me in my life. You can always say, it could have been a little better this way or that way, but I don't think, on balance, I don't think I'd want to go ahead and say that anything I did differently would have been better.

MK: Well, shall we end here then?

WN: Okay, mm hmm. Thank you very much.

MK: Okay, thank you, Judge, for all your time.

END OF INTERVIEW

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